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The Ideological Import of a Second Identity: A Critical Image Analysis to Global EFL Materials

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The Ideological Import of a Second Identity: A Critical Image Analysis to Global EFL Materials

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Abstract

The critical analysis of images or visual texts, as an emerging and adapted version of critical discourse analysis (CDA), can contribute to distinguish bias or fair gender manifestation. The rationale behind this study is that little systematic and exhaustive studies have been conducted with an eye towards investigating images solely in EFL textbooks. To offset this imbalance, this paper adopted Fairclough's (2001) critical discourse analysis (CDA) and social semiotic analysis (SSA) framework by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) to interrogate the extent and types of gender bias in the *Four Corners* series, the commercially-produced English language textbooks (Richards & Bohlke, 2012). By adopting a quantitative and qualitative design, image typologies were tallied, girded and tabulated to see how the probable and hidden portrayal image patterns had been rendered for both genders. The results revealed over-representation persists in all the textbook series in certain degrees for both genders and while a textbook series might over-represent one gender it does not necessarily imply that the individual textbook over-represents the same gender.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, social semiotic analysis, critical image analysis



La Importación Ideológica de la Segunda Identidad: Un Análisis Crítico de Imágenes de Materiales Globales de EFL

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Resumen

El análisis crítico de imágenes o textos visuales, como una versión adaptada y emergente del análisis crítico de discurso (ACD), puede contribuir a distinguir manifestaciones de género justas o sesgadas. El fundamento de este estudio es que se han realizado pocos estudios sistemáticos y exhaustivos con la mirada hacia la investigación de imágenes en libros de texto de EFL. Para compensar este desequilibrio, el estudio adopta el análisis crítico del discurso (ACD) de Fairclough (2001) y el marco de análisis de la semiótica social (SSA) de Kress y van Leeuwen (2006) para interrogar la extensión y tipos de sesgos de género en la serie Four Corners, libros de texto de inglés producidos comercialmente (Richards & Bohlke, 2012). A través de un diseño cuantitativo y cualitativo, las tipologías de imagen fueron contados, ceñidas y tabuladas para ver cómo se habían representado los patrones de imagen probables y ocultos para ambos sexos. Los resultados revelaron la persistencia de la sobre-representación en ciertos grados para ambos sexos, y que mientras una serie de libros podría sobre-representar a un género, eso no implica necesariamente que el libro individual sobre-represente el mismo género.

Palabras clave: análisis crítico del discurso, análisis semiótico social, análisis crítico de imágenes

Fairclough (2001) states that although his focus is on the verbal elements in communication, visual images play an important role in a modern society's communicative life as well: "very often visuals and verbals operate in a mutually reinforcing way which makes them very difficult to disentangle". In the same vein, Kress (2003, p.20) argues that, "the world told is a different world to the world shown". Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p.5) suggest that "interpreting images critically is a must because all images entirely fall into the realm of ideology, where particular discourses are privileged, while others are downplayed or even silenced". Ideology is a significant aspect of establishing and maintaining power relations from the viewpoint of critical discourse analysis (Wodak, 2001, p.11).

Although a spate of scholarly works on gender images in the mass media such as newspapers, radio and advertisements have been undertaken; little has been done on the gender images in EFL textbooks in particular. So far little has been done to interrogate solely the extent of portrayal of gender images in the commercially-produced English textbooks from the critical image analysis perspective.

Given that an ideal EFL textbook should render both genders equally, previous researches have shown that in many materials this is not the case. There is often a male supremacy detected in many research areas relevant to the manifestation of gender. Applying a rather recently-written EFL textbook to explore some of the established research areas into gender over-representation, it is assumed that the male-dominated tendency has been shifted to balanced manifestation of male and female in EFL materials.

Applying Fairclough's (2001) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the present study is to examine the extent and types of gender bias in the *Four Corners series*, the commercial English language series (Richards & Bohlke, 2012). Gender representation was investigated in terms of visual typologies proposed by Kress and van Luween (2006): participation, gaze direction, proximity, point of view, and body display. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to examine how critically the images display or import equality or inequality between both genders in the *Four Corners series*. Based on the above, the following five contributing questions plus one main question research were posed:

1. Who is active in the images?
2. Where is the gaze directed?
3. How is distance realized in the images?
4. How images are viewed?
5. What does the clothing communicate?
6. To what extent is the Four Corners series gender positioned from the critical image perspective?

Background

Gender and Language

Gender and Language is a relatively new discipline within sociolinguistics, usually said to be identified by the seminal work of Lakoff's *Language and Woman's Place* in 1975. The discipline has already aroused considerable enthusiasm among applied linguists on ideological grounds. Ideologically, language and gender scholars seek to show that language was a fundamental means of constructing gender discrepancies, and inequalities between men and women. Consequently, two aspects emerged in language and gender research; first, how women and men talked, and second, how both genders were represented in language. Today, ideological studies have a common concern to probe how people's identities are constructed in gendered ways within localized 'communities of practice', but also in relation to larger gendered discourses (Sunderland, 2004). While the gender-based studies have been modified since the 1970s in lieu of developments in women's status, there is, however, a broad unanimity among scholars that gender continues to be considerably relevant to the way people interact via language, and in the way they are positioned and represented by gendered discourses or ways of seeing the world. Language and gender scholars have recurrently challenged the terms 'gender' and 'sex', which cannot be utilized interchangeably. As Holmes (2001) holds it 'gender has stabilized as a term to distinguish people in terms of their socio-cultural behavior and to typify masculine and feminine conducts as continua rather than as a dichotomy'.

Critical Discourse Analysis

In their seminal book, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) introduce ‘a visual code or grammar of visual design’. They emphasize that both visual and verbal structures can be utilized to express meanings from common cultural sources. According to them, ‘Visual structures are indicative of particular interpretations of experience and forms of social interactions’. They believe that, meanings can be constructed by different modes, design, production and interpretation. The participants in this sort of grammar are the creators and the viewers.

As put by van Dijk (1995), visual discourse analysis is ideology analysis since “ideologies are typically expressed and reproduced in discourse and communication, including non-verbal semiotic messages, such as pictures, photographs, and movies” The concept of ideology is closely related to power and dominance. According to Fairclough (1995), in today’s developed capitalist countries power is mainly exercised through consent and ideology rather than through coercion and physical force. This results in the enhanced role of discourse in the exercise of power. Furthermore, whereas some of the conditions of mind control result from the situation and are largely contextual, some are discursive: certain forms of discourse, certain structures and meanings of a language are more influential on recipients’ minds than others (van Dijk, 2001).

Critical approaches to visual images are stemmed from an assortment of disciplines of inquiry, including visual discourse analysis (Albers, 2007, cited in Serafini, 2010), gender advertising (Goffman, 1979), critical media studies (Semali, 2003), visual communication (Messaris, 2003), and cultural studies (Lister & Wells, 2001). Each of these approaches focuses on the historical, political and socio-cultural contexts of the production, and dissemination of visual images.

Albers (2007) notes a visual text as, ‘a structure of messages in which are embedded social conventions and perceptions, rendering the discourse communities to which visual text maker identifies’. Albers (2007) approach, known as ‘visual discourse analysis’ goes far beyond the perceptual and structural perspectives, attempting to locate the interpretation of visual texts in a socio-cultural and critical blueprint.

However, analyzing visual images from an ideological perspective ‘provides the possibility for renegotiating the meanings inherent in such constructs rather than considering these as fixed, unchanged and natural’ (Idema, 2001).

To understand the images requires readers to consider aspects of production and reception, in addition to the aspects of the image and text itself. The capacity of images to affect us as viewers is dependent on the larger cultural meanings they evoke and the social, political and cultural contexts in which they are viewed (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001).

Mustapha (2013) identified three phases of studies on gender and language education research: the first phase studies created awareness of gender imbalance in learning materials; second phase studies served as follow-up studies by assessing responses and reforms in learning materials and the third phase of studies extended the focus beyond textbook representations to talks around the text in classroom.

From the early 70's onwards, gender bias in EFL materials has picked interest of researchers worldwide. The most relevant studies of sexism and its manifestations in ESL/EFL textbooks that can be dated as: Porreca (1984), Ansary and Babii (2003), Sano, Iida, and Hardy (2002), Dominguez (2003), Stockdale (2006), Otlowski (2007), Tietz (2007), Sadker and Zittleman (2007), Kobia (2009), Healy (2009), Hamdan (2010), Yang (2010), and Lee (2011) to name a few.

Giaschi (2000) employed a critical analysis to images in contemporary textbooks to find out if any kind of ideology is encapsulated into them. He argued that the images have become an inseparable ingredient of presentation of language and culture that ESL students may find it difficult to challenge the hidden presentation in the materials provided to them for learning English. Moreover, he maintained that it seems timely to make it clear how ideologies are being packaged and presented.

Kobia (2009) surveyed the portrayal of gender images in primary school English textbooks using ‘*Let’s Learn English*’ series as a case study. The findings indicated under-representation of female gender in authorship, editorship, typesetting, photography and illustrating. The findings further revealed that male gender outnumber the female gender in usage of characters depicted in illustrations, photographs, names and titles used to refer to the genders.

Tajeddin and Janebi Enayat (2010) conducted a study to identify the positioning of gender in the images of two international and one local ELT textbooks: *New Headway*, *Top Notch*, and *Iran Language Institute (ILI) English Textbooks*. Although the findings for *ILI* English textbooks were more or less different and apparently indicative of more gender equality, the frequency of each gender positioning in the images of the three textbooks indicated more power and better social status for males.

In sharp contrast to interpreting and understanding of the textual language, images are autonomous systems of communication that do not reproduce reality but produce images of reality bound up with the interests of the social setting within which the images are produced, propagated, and used (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Therefore, they are a suitable tool for the assessment of semantic contents and hence to create specific types of order, relations, and identities within the pedagogic and communicative discourse. Consequently, image analysis turns out to be rather relevant when analyzing EFL textbooks from critical discourse analysis vantage.

Reviewing the related literature reveals that an evident gap in the previous studies. Although gender representation in EFL textbooks have been the subject of a number of research studies via content analysis, no systematic and exhaustive studies, have aimed to investigate images critically. To offset the imbalance, the concern in this study is to examine gender manifestations in the *Four Corners series* from the critical image analysis perspective.

Methodology

Materials

The images for this inquiry were drawn from the *Four Corners series* as the selected EFL materials. This series has been authored by Jack C. Richards and David Bohlke published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) and released in 2012. The *Four Corners*, a 4-level (1, 2, 3, and 4), sets a new framework, applying the natural language that people really speak along with a learner-centered approach. The series embraces three groups of student's book, workbook, and teacher's edition along with class audio CDs, class video DVD, as well as classware presentation software. It has

four volumes that each one is composed of 12, 10, 10, and 10 units, respectively. Each unit consists of four core modules: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Due to diversity and abundance of the selected images, a method of culling was employed; namely, both gender images analyzed were those that juxtaposed, either in a single photo or in pair. This culling mode yielded 249 images for the analysis as indicated by the Table 1.

Table 1.
Number of units & images

Volume	No. of Units	No. of Images
Four Corners 1	12	65
Four Corners 2	12	61
Four Corners 3	12	60
Four Corners 4	12	63
Total	48	249

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework was adopted from Fairclough's (2001) and social semiotic analysis (SSA) classification proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). Fairclough's (2001) introduced critical image analysis which addresses three aspects of images: description, interpretation and explanation which is a useful tool to analyze positioning in EFL/ESL books. He took an adapted version of CDA, critical image analysis, to interrogate how images are justified by formulating a series of six questions on the basis of the focus of CDA such: 1) What is the activity of the images? 2) Who is active or passive in the images? 3) Who has status in the images? 4) What does the body language communicate? 5) What does the clothing communicate? 6) Where are the eyes directed? Each of these six queries can be subsumed under a specific theme functionally: the first falls within establishes a field of activity for the image, information that can help to determine what areas of gender interaction are being focused on and what areas are being ignored. Queries three and four interrogate male or female dichotomy. Queries five and six questions how images can reinforce gender positions.

Data Analysis

As it was stated before, the main thrust was to interrogate the gender manifestation of images in the Four Corners series by applying a critical image analysis. To put it in a nutshell, each of the above image typologies was investigated to determine whether this series was sufficiently gender-based or if a significant gendered imbalance prevails. To this end, the whole series was analyzed with a focus on 245 visual images totally taken from the four volumes. During studying the content of visuals, image-based information given in the activities, reading passages, and audio clips were also analyzed, when necessary, to make the analysis richer and defensible. The image typologies developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 50): participation, gaze direction, proximity, point of view, and body display were mapped onto three aspects of images utilized by Fairclough's (2001): description, interpretation and explanation. However, slight alterations to the analyzed image typologies and analytical principles were made after the research corpus was examined critically. Each of the six research questions have been investigated as follows:

1. Four values for actual role of each participant considered: actor goals, behavior and reactor.
2. Three types of gaze direction identified and coded: gaze at the viewer, gaze away from the viewer and no gaze direction.
3. Close-up, medium and long shot examined as three values of proximity.
4. Frontal, profile and rear status were three levels distinguished for point of view.
5. For body display, a gamut of clothing for males and females running from sparsely to lightly and fully clothed differentiated.
6. For gender positioning, gender representations examined via: male solely, more males, female solely, more females, equal share.

Procedures

The present study was set to the gender manifestation in the *Four Corners* series within the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework via analyzing the portrayal of male and female image renditions. Admittedly, this study included both quantitative and qualitative approaches, but the

overall design of the study was descriptive–analytic. Quantitative analysis appears to be very common in content analysis and it is sometimes combined with qualitative analysis. To this end, quantitative (frequency and percentage) analysis of gender relation was tallied and tabulated to discern the probable and hidden patterns.

To estimate the reliability of the data, the inter-coder agreement was conducted. The frequencies identified by the researcher totaled and averaged and then correlated with the frequencies obtained by one of the instructor of *Four Corners* series, who was trained and tutoring in Pooyesh private language institute. This estimation was done via the use of a one-tailed bivariate correlation analysis using Spearman’s rho. Definitely, the reliability indices must be high enough to make the study reliable. Owing to subjective nature of image interpretation, it had been decided from the start of the investigation that wide disagreements and odd codings should definitely result in the faulty analysis being discarded from the corpus. Where there was a difference in their coding, it was resolved through extensive discussion, and it was agreed that, where needed, a third coder should be asked to code the problematic images. Furthermore, in their meeting, the coders used the context in which an image occurred to crosscheck and confirm their codings. Table 2 indicates the reliability indices estimated.

Table 2
Reliability index

Visual Categories	Spearman’s rho
Participation	.718
Gaze direction	.617
Proximity	.812
Point of view	.711
Body image	.799
Gender positioning	.819

As it can be observed from Table 2, gaze direction has the lowest reliability index among other visual typologies (.617) whereas gender positioning has the highest index (.819). Furthermore, proximity (.812), body image (.799), participation (.718), and point of view (.711) rank

respectively. This study confirms the arguments raised by Watson (1970) who emphasized on ‘culture bound’ nature of gaze direction.

Results

Participation

Regarding the visual participation, all of the images involved the representation of narrative processes: Actor, Goal, Behavior, and Reactor. Based on the table 1, the percentage of male’s role as active participants in the Four Corners series is approximately as large as that of females. In 53.3 % of the cases, males were presented as active participants of the images while females were presented in 50.6 % of the cases (Figure 1).



Figure 1.

In addition, the percentage of gender’s role as goal 18.4 of other participants’ actions for females is more than the size of males’ (Figure 2).

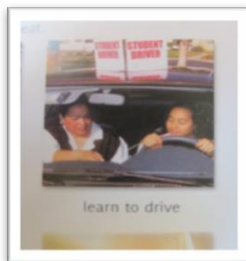


Figure 2.

Furthermore, the cases in which female participants were presented as reacting to other participants’ actions was more than number of males’ (Figure 3). To put it differently, females were more likely to react to other participants’ actions than males.



Figure 3.

The overall results of this part indicated that females appeared as reactors while males were the actors of the images. Thus, they were shown as the passive participants of the society performing executive roles. Simply put, Table 3 clearly shows the dominant power of females in the images and at the same time manifests the weak and submissive position of males.

Table 3.
Participation

	Actor	Goal	Behavior	Reactor	Total
	F / %	F / %	F / %	F / %	
Male (100)	80 (53.3)	20 (13.2)	88 (58.8)	60 (39.9)	248
Female (100)	76 (50.6)	24 (18.4)	79 (60.2)	64 (48.9)	224
Total (100)	137 (86.7)	44 (31.6)	167(119)	124 (88.8)	472

Gaze Direction

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 115) state that ‘a key feature that determines the ideology behind gender presentation in the images is the gaze or eye direction of the participants’. They also believe that when participants look at the viewer, vectors, formed by participants' eye lines, connect the participants with the viewer. Supposing when someone does not look directly at the viewer, contact may not be established. These kinds of images address the viewers indirectly. Here the viewer is not the object, but the subject of the look.

Males gazed at the viewer in 29.2 % of the cases while females did so in 35.8 % of the cases (Figure 4).

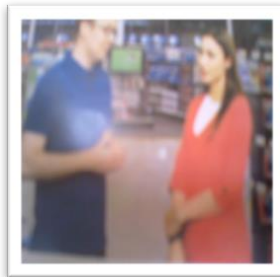


Figure 4.

They were also represented as gazing away from the viewer in 96 % of the images while females were depicted gazing away from the viewer in 83 % of the images (Figure 5).



Figure 5.

Images were found of women alone gazing directly into the camera. Their gaze was associated with by calm conducts like smiling, indicating the ritualization of subordination. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) state that participants may smile, in which case the viewer is asked to enter into a relation of social affinity with them. Smile can function as an offering of an inferior (Figure 6).

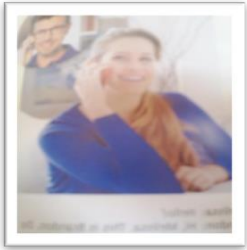


Figure 6.

As it is clear in the Table 4, the results for *Four Corners* series indicated not a richer domination for males in comparison with what was found for females.

Table 4.
Gaze direction

	At the viewer	Away from the viewer	No gaze	Total
	F / %	F / %	F / %	
Male	44 (29.2)	144 (96)	6 (0.7)	194 (100)
Female	54 (35.8)	125 (83)	8 (1.1)	187 (100)
Total	98 (65.0)	269(179)	14 (1.8)	381 (100)

Males gazed away from the viewer in 96% of the cases while females gazed away from the viewer in 83% of the cases. It seemed that men do not like the femininity of gazing at the viewer and consider it as a passive action which indicates their weakness. Females, on the other hand, looked at the viewer in 35.8% of the cases which is more than that of males which was found to be 29.2%. As a result, females were not indicated as more passive objects of an active gaze than males and were represented as imposed by the power of an active participant in the images.

Proximity

Proximity or apparent physical distance also suggests certain relationships between a person depicted in an image and the viewer. Chandler (1998) maintains how physical proximity between people reflected ranges of formality. He elaborates three main kinds of shot-size as follows:

1. Long shot (LS): showing all or most of a fairly large subject usually much of the surroundings,
2. Medium shots (MS): the subject and the setting take approximately equal spaces in the frame,
3. Close-up (CU) shots: show a subject's face in great detail filling the screen.

He also referred to four specific ranges: 1) Intimate: up to 18 inches; 2) Personal: 18 inches to 4 feet; 3) Social: 4 to 12 feet; and 4) Public: 12 to 25 feet. Table 6 indicates the frequencies plus percentages of close-up, medium shot and long shot of images in both genders. From the semiotic perspective, zooming into a close-up can enhance the importance of a person (van Leeuwen, 2005). Thus, showing a single gender more in close-up images can cause more power for that gender.

Table 5 shows that the percentage of male's presentation in close-up frames are a bit more than that of females. In the *Four Corners* series males were presented in close-up images for 64% of the cases while females were presented in 60.6 % of the cases. Although differences were small, females were more likely to be represented in medium and long shots and males in close-ups with high degree of facial prominence. Furthermore, while males were portrayed in 98.2% of long shots, females were portrayed in 96.3 % of the cases in long shot images.

Table 5.
Proximity

	Close-up	Medium shot	Long shot	Total
	F / %	F / %	F / %	
Male	96 (64)	220 (96)	234 (98.2)	450 (100)
Female	89 (60.6)	215 (92)	230 (96.3)	518 (100)
Total	124 (86.20)	435 (188)	464 (194.5)	968 (100)

Point of View

Table 6 indicates the frequencies and percentages of males and females from visual typology, viz, point of view. Females depicted in a fairly same way from males since the ideal viewer is assumed to be male and the image of the female is designed as the object of scrutiny as well due to absence of the gaze element (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Table 6.
Point of view

	Frontality	Profile	Rear	Total
	F / %	F / %	F / %	
Male	140 (91.2)	116 (90.3)	30 (22.2)	248 (100)
Female	142 (92.2)	110 (88.2)	32 (24.4)	268 (100)
Total	262 (179.4)	226 (178.5)	44 (32.4)	516 (100)

Furthermore, females were shown in rear shots in 24.4% whereas males appeared in 22.2% cased of images. It seems that both genders enjoy the equal manifestations in the *Four Corners* series as it can be inferred from the below table (Figures 7, 8, and 9 below).



Figure 7.



Figure 8.



Figure 9.

As put by van Leeuwen (2005), “one of the main features of an image that can affect the representation of the participants is that of the clothing that showing the participant’s beliefs, personality, socio-economic status, and the overall character of the wearer”. The results from Table 7 indicate that males were presented in almost all of the cases, viz, 97.6%, fully clothed.

Table 7.
Body display

	Sparsely clothed	Lightly clothed	Fully clothed	Total
	F / %	F / %	F / %	
Male	32 (21.6)	22 (14.6)	74 (97.6)	128(100)
Female	29 (19.5)	20 (13.2)	76 (99.2)	125
(100)				
Total	61 (41.1)	42 (27.8)		150(196.8)
253(100)				

In contrast, females were presented more fully clothed in comparison with males; namely, in 99.2% of the cases (Figure 10).



Figure 10.

This amount, albeit small, is more than the amount of being fully clothed for males. In 13.2% of the cases females were presented lightly clothed which portrayed some parts of their body while in 14.6 % of the cases males were presented in a lightly clothed form. In many images especially the ones on leisure, women were shown as wearing clothes that did not reveal parts of their body (Figure 11).



Figure 11.

Males are shown in 21.6 % of the cases sparsely clothed whereas females are in 19.5 % of the cases sparsely clothed. Although the images were supposedly from the United States plus European countries, the series has

observed this identity norm. Overall, it *is* free from one type of sexual information that is an integral part of Western history (Figure 12).



Figure 12.

Men are depicted as the subject of envy; women are depicted as objects to be desired and possessed as maintained by Berger (1972).

Gender Positioning

Fairclough (2001) proposes the gender positioning of images in EFL textbooks. He employs the word ‘positioning’ as: individuals or group of individuals who are manifested by discourse such as: in control, strong, weak, inferior, and superior. On the one hand, he defines positioning of males as objects of jealousy and females as objects to be owned. Giaschi (2000) believes that, writers have encapsulated more photographs, illustrations and drawings in textbooks, showing more attention to the visual presentation in addition to their textual content. Furthermore, images are not only deployed to support textual content but to reflect meaning on their own stance.

Table 8 contains 1030 images relating to gender that out of which 249 (168.3%), 156 (103.7%), 226 (150.2%), 172 (114.4%), and 226 (150.3%) cases manifested “male solely”, “more male”, “female solely”, “more female” and “equal share” between males and females, respectively.

Table 8.

Gender positioning

Gender Positioning	Male solely	More males	Female solely	More females	Equal share	Total
Volume	F / %	F / %	F / %	F / %	F / %	
One	82 (54.6)	40 (26.6)	78 (51.9)	42 (27.9)		57 (37.9)
299(100)						
Two	56 (37.2)	38 (25.3)	53 (35.2)	40 (26.6)		58 (38.6)
245(100)						
Three	55 (36.6)	42 (27.9)	47 (31.2)	49 (32.6)		54 (35.9)
247(100)						
Four	57 (37.9)	36 (23.9)	48 (31.9)	41 (27.3)		57 (37.9)
239(100)						
Total	250 (168.3)	156 (103.7)	226 (150.2)	172 (114.4)		226(150.3)
1030(100)						

As it can be observed, females enjoy equal or in some cases higher gender positioning than males (Figures 13, 14, and 15).



Figure 13.



Figure 14.



Figure 15.

Discussion

Based on the results of the critical image analysis of the 249 images (illustrations, drawings and pictures) in the *Four Corners* series, a couple of observations can be made about how males and females moves are portrayed in terms of seven investigated visual typologies: participation, gaze direction, proximity, point of view, body display and gender positing. Let it remain unsaid that a pre-determined ranking was considered for the visual typologies in order of importance or significance and due to the quantitative nature of this study; they were not treated as equally important.

With respect to narrative roles, females were frequently shown as actors and reactors in the *Four Corners*. It must be noted that the separation of genders was fully obvious. The concurrent presence of two genders occurred more often in the images of family gathering at home and the workplace where men performed ‘executive’ roles. Females mostly tended to be ‘doers’ in images that separated genders. It is worth mentioning that where males were positioned as passive or reactive, the context or setting of the image ensured and endorsed their equal status (Image 3). Females usually tended to be actors when they were represented as providing service to others and/or doing chores around the house.

When looking at the first visual typology ‘gaze direction’, gender representation of male is not very significant. That is, the participants’ gaze at the viewer is 29.2% for males vs. 35.8% for females and the participants

gaze away from the viewer is 96% for males vs. 83% for females. Depending on how we interpret these figures determines whether the *Four Corners series* could be considered biased or not. In other words, the existing disparity is not so significant and can be ignored. It seems that we can use un-biased images in biased ways and conversely use biased images in un-biased ways. On the other hand, as van Leeuwen (2005) maintains: “In studying social interaction, the intensity of gaze should be considered”. He proposed three forms of gaze: 1) sharp focusing on the other person's eyes; 2) clear focusing about the other person's head and face; and 3) peripheral having the other person within the field of vision. Chandler (1998) claims that the sharpest gaze was among Arabs, Latin Americans and southern Europeans; the northern Europeans, Indians, Pakistanis and then Asians had the most peripheral gaze, respectively.

Regarding the visual typology ‘proximity’, the *Four Corners series* represents females in medium (92%) and long shots (96.3%) and males in close-ups (64% vs. 48.6%) with high degree of facial prominence than females. From the semiotic perspective, zooming into a close-up can enhance the perceived importance of a person. As put by Chandler (1998): ‘When showing a male or female with a high status notably at a company or business office, close-ups were used’. This disparity in males and female disparity (23 and 16.6%) may be attributed to ‘faceism’. Images of people with a high degree of facial prominence can elicit positive attributes. Males and females are, then, evaluated as “competent (intelligent, assertive, ambitious, etc.) and likeable if presented with a high rather than a low degree of facial prominence” (Schwarz & Kurz, 1989).

When it comes to third visual typology, point of view, *Four Corners series* portrays females more than males from a frontal position (92.2% vs. 87.2%), indicating viewer identification and involvement (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Nevertheless, they state that ‘frontality’ is a code of social inferiority since historically the frontal portrait has been connected with the working class. Concerning profile view, female images account for (72.2% vs. 90.3%) and female rear images allocated (24.4%) vs. 8.0%). Based on above data, the main mode of seeing females, the essential use to which their images were put, has not altered.

Concerning the body display, there was a not great difference in how males and females appeared in *Four Corners* from the body image.

Although the participants were supposedly from the United States and European countries, the *Four Corners* has observed this identity norm. Overall, the series was free from one type of sexual information. Nevertheless, their clothes were not tight and provocative.

Zeroing in on the last visual typology, gender positioning, findings revealed that the series had a more or less neutral perspective toward gender manifestation visually. Also it showed over-representation in all *Four Corners* series in various degrees of both female and male images rendering. It seems that while a textbook series might over-represent one gender it does not necessarily mean that the single textbook within that series over-represents the same gender. Simply put, two of the textbook series over-represented male images and two of the textbook series over-represented female images. Furthermore, within a specific textbook series, variations were detected in the individual textbooks. A telling example is *Four Corners 1*, where the series over-represented male images but *Four Corners 2* over-represented female images (see Table 8 for comparison). Even in one individual textbook variation could be discerned vividly. For instance, in *Four Corners 3*, males were overrepresented in the visual typology ‘gaze direction’ but not in the other typologies which over-represented female images or were balanced pictorially. The overall rating for this textbook was that it favored female images.

Conclusion

The current paper was inspired by the fact that male over-representation is prevalent in EFL textbooks. Presumably, the male-dominated manifestation has been shifted to balance rendering due to more and more researches spearheaded at altering the present status of gender inequality in newly written EFL materials. Therefore, particularly six key visual typologies as the tools in examining the images in the *Four Corners* series within critical image analysis and social semiotics framework investigated.

In a nutshell, the whole picture created by *Four Corners* series is a fairly decent view of gender that consistent with equality and equity as educational goals. It seems that *Four Corners* series has succeeded in creating an equal balance in the number of visual typologies concerning female and male images. Although it displays gender-representation image variation within

and across series, it is not extreme but tolerable one. In fact, this research demonstrates that the series conveys a special vision of and/or positioning of gender reality. As noted by Giaschi (2000), ‘the use of images in ESL texts to communicate a particular culture and a particular commonsense about the world has grown since the 1970s, a trend that still continues and needs to be addressed for creating pedagogically sound materials’. Therefore, in this limited study of four-volume series, the shift from male-dominated manifestation to more fair one is correlated to the publication date.

Exploring gender representation from critical image perspective has still a long way to go. Kress (2010) believes that critical image approach has been under-exploited and its analytical framework has the potential of being revised and extended. Furthermore, the visual categories are capable of capturing further aspects of gender display in educational materials as was discovered by this study.

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